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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMMIGRATION
WORKING COMMITTEE AT THE SECRETARIAT LEVEL

First Meeting
Santiago, Chile

Background Paper

1. Immigration has been in the past a major factor in the economic development of Latin America. At the same time, immigration is itself dependent upon economic development; and the migratory inflow is at any given time closely related to the level of economic activity in the countries concerned. The problem before the Committee is that of determining the relation between economic development and immigration both generally and specifically, and of assisting economic development by means of immigration. The problem will vary according to the economic and demographic situation of the different Latin American countries.

2. There is a surplus population in Europe of some four to five million people, predominantly in Italy, Western Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Greece, Malta and Trieste. This surplus may be reduced to some extent by internal development, by intra-European migration, and by the re-armament programme, but these factors are unlikely to solve the problem of the surplus. It is becoming increasingly recognised that limitations of natural resources make it unlikely that the problem of the surplus can be solved within Europe, and that it is necessary to seek increased

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emigration possibilities. This belief was recently reflected in the OEEC grant of a million dollars to the ILO for technical assistance for European emigration.

3. While this surplus represents a serious economic and social problem for Europe, it also provides a stimulus to the forming of soundly conceived and financed immigration schemes. International action for the promotion of the development of Latin America involving immigration from Europe can serve the dual purpose of assisting Latin America and at the same time aiding European recovery.

4. The planning and execution of migration schemes is a difficult and complex matter. International assistance, apart from the work of IRO in financing the migration of refugees, has hitherto primarily taken the form of the work on conventions and standards undertaken by the ILO and also by the Social Affairs Department of the United Nations, supplemented now by the important and far reaching operational manpower and migration programme of the ILO.

This programme is aimed at activating existing but latent manpower needs including those for migrants as a contribution to economic activity. In addition to the overcoming of difficulties of matching labour supply and demand it has recently become increasingly recognised that a major obstacle to migration is a lack of economic demand for migrants which needs to be overcome by economic development in countries capable and desirous of receiving immigrants. At the ILO Preliminary Migration Conference, at the Third Session of ECLA and at the 11th Session of the Economic and Social Council, it was decided to pursue the economic aspects of migration

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at the international level. The decision was taken, with the agreement of the ILO which has the primary international responsibility in the field of migration, that the economic aspects of migration in relation to Latin America should be pursued by the Economic Commission for Latin America in co-operation with the ILO and the other interested Specialised Agencies, and that the Executive Secretary should set up a Working Committee at the Secretariat level for this purpose.

5. The terms of reference of the ECLA Working Committee and an account of the circumstances leading to its setting up are contained in the Report and Resolution of the Third Session of ECLA (E/1717 and E/1762). The resolution of the 11th Session of ECOSOC dealing with the Third Annual Report of ECLA is in E/1823. Of interest also is the resolution of the same session of ECOSOC dealing with the Report of the Population Commission (E/1783).

6. The ILO, the FAO and the IRO are appointing representatives to the Committee, and close liaison will be maintained with the Social Affairs Department of the United Nations. The International Bank, the WHO and UNESCO are maintaining contact with the Committee's work with a view to participating at stages which they may consider appropriate. The Inter-American Economic and Social Council has been approached for suggestions as to their co-operation with the work of the Committee.

7. The Committee's terms of reference fall into two parts: first the general study of the relation between economic development and immigration; and secondly the making of country surveys and the giving

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of advice to Governments on specific plans and projects. It is suggested that the two parts be pursued concurrently in order that the general study be as practical as possible, and in order that the findings of the general study may be taken into account in the advice given in particular cases.